AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
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МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ АМНИСТИЯ
منظمة العفو الدولية
國際特赦組織

URGENT ACTION

TL4668

PUBLIC **AI Index: ASA 21/11/99**

UA 37/99 **Fear of torture/ill-treatment** **26 February 1999**

EAST TIMOR **Eleven men**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of 11 men, who have been in police custody since 22 February 1999 without access to legal counsel. Detainees in East Timor are frequently denied access to lawyers, their families and medical care, and are commonly tortured to extract confessions or obtain information.

They were part of a group of 18 men arrested in the village of Vatuvou, Maubara Sub-district, Liquisa District, by a joint team of soldiers from the Indonesian Armed Forces and a pro-Indonesian armed paramilitary group called *Besi Merah Putih* (literally "the iron red and white",referring to the colours of the Indonesian flag). They were apparently taken to the Police Headquarters (*Polres*) in the town of Liquisa.

All 18 were apparently denied food during the first days of their detention. Seven were released for medical treatment after human rights lawyers intervened. They had been beaten and otherwise ill-treated.

The 11 men still in custody are denied access to independent legal counsel, although they are now allowed visits from representatives of the Catholic Church. It is not clear whether they have access to their families.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests in Maubara come amid rising tension in East Timor. On 27 January, the Indonesian Government announced that East Timor might be allowed to separate from Indonesia. This has led to sometimes violent confrontations between pro- and anti-independence groups. Discussions on the future of the territory between Indonesia and the former colonial power, Portugal, are continuing under United Nations auspices. Meanwhile, however, the situation on the ground remains serious, with an increase in unlawful killings by the Indonesian Armed Forces and pro-Indonesian armed paramilitary groups. Paramilitary units have recently threatened journalists, Australian diplomats in East Timor and non-governmental human rights groups, and Amnesty International continues to receive reports of arbitrary arrests of East Timorese by the Armed Forces and armed paramilitary units.

In February, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention visited Indonesia and East Timor. The group is expected to produce a preliminary report on its visit before the next session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which begins in March 1999.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Bahasa Indonesia or English or your own language:
- urging the authorities to allow all 11 men access to independent legal counsel, medical care and their families;
- urging that none of the men be tortured or ill-treated, and that the allegations of ill-treatment of the seven men already released be independently and fully investigated and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that the 11 men still in custody be released or charged with a recognisably criminal offence.

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COPIES TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of Indonesia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 April 1999.